

OBSERVATIONS ON *ELANOIDES FORFICATUS*  
AND *ICTINIA SUBCÆRULEA* IN KANSAS.

BY N. S. GOSS.

THE Swallow-tailed Kite is an irregular summer resident along the timbered streams, being abundant some seasons and rare others. It arrives early in May, and devotes the first few days to courtship and mating, the next to selecting nesting places, which I have so far found to be in the small branches near the tops of the tallest trees. By the last of the month the nests are completed, and as the trees by that time are in full leaf they are largely hidden from view. They are made of sticks loosely interwoven and lined sparingly with the soft, ribbon-like strippings from the inner bark of old, decaying or dead cottonwood trees. The eggs are oval; the ground-color is cream white, irregularly spotted and blotched with dark reddish brown, running largely together towards the small end. The measurements of three are  $1.84 \times 1.48$ ,  $1.87 \times 1.50$ ,  $1.90 \times 1.50$ .

As the nests are hard to reach, I have been able to examine but four. Three of these had only one egg in each; in the other there were two eggs, nearly ready to hatch, and the shell of one at the foot of the tree; but I have it on good authority that in the near vicinity a nest with four, and another with six, eggs have been found. The males assist in building the nest, alternate in sitting and in feeding the young, and, in fact, appear as attentive as the females.\*

April 27, 1876 (the earliest arrival noticed), a pair put in an appearance at Neosho Falls, and as they continued to circle in their graceful flights over the same grounds—the edge of the prairie and timber on the Neosho River—I became satisfied that their nesting places would be selected within the circle, and I devoted my leisure moments to watching their movements. On the 5th of May they were joined by another pair, and later in the day, to my great surprise and joy, two pairs of Mississippi Kites

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\* I saw a pair of these birds once in the act of copulation. They were sitting on a small, horizontal limb close together and facing each other, when, quick as a flash, the female turned or backed under the limb, the male meeting her from the top.

appeared and also joined in the circling flights. It was a beautiful and, to me, exciting sight to watch their various motions and coqueting evolutions, sailing high in the air, swooping down with partially closed wings, skimming along the prairie, lost for a moment in the woods, ascending in spiral flights, gliding from slow to swift and swift to slow without a flit or break, like Swallows. For grace and symmetry of action I would rank them first among the aërial birds, attaching the blue ribbon to the Swallow-tailed. Unfortunately I was called away on the 8th and did not return until the 18th. At first I thought the birds had left, but I soon occasionally noticed one here and there flying low down and often disappearing in the tree-tops. I lost no time, but hastened, with glass and gun in hand, for the timber embraced in their former flights, and in a short time had the pleasure of finding a pair of the Swallow-tailed Kites building a nest in the top of a large hickory tree, the nest being about two-thirds completed; by cautiously approaching and lying down behind a fallen tree I was enabled to watch them unobserved, and, with the aid of the glass, to plainly see them at their work. When either came to the nest alone with a stick it would place it hurriedly upon the nest, but when both met at the nest they would at once commence fussing about, pulling at the sticks and trying to arrange the material, first one getting upon the nest, and then the other, turning around as if trying to fit a place for their bodies. I think at one time they must have worked at least ten minutes trying to weave in or place in a satisfactory manner a stripping from the inner bark of the cottonwood. As builders they are not a success. After a little over two hours of watching I turned my attention to hunting for the nests of others. In this I failed, but found near by, sitting on the dead limb of an oak, a pair of Mississippi Kites, busily engaged in dressing up their feathers. My anxiety to secure a pair for my collection overcame the desire for their eggs, especially as the birds are rare in the State and the finding of their nest doubtful; I believed I could get both by shooting one from the tree and the other on the wing as it left; so I carefully crawled to within easy shooting distance, sprang to my feet, shot one, and to my surprise the other did not fly, but with outstretched wings looked down with astonishment at its mate fluttering upon the ground. It was too good a shot to lose and I dropped it beside the other,

and proudly started for home, more than satisfied with my success.

On the 27th of the same month I found the other pair of Mississippi Kites nesting in the fork of a medium sized oak, about forty feet from the ground. It was *an old Crow's nest* fitted up with a few extra sticks and green twigs in leaf for lining. In the nest there was one egg. I returned on the 2d of June for the eggs, found the nest robbed and the birds sitting in a tree near by, but they appeared to take no notice of, or interest in, the nest as I approached it. On July 5, in strolling over the grounds, I noticed one of the birds on the same nest. In it there was one egg in an advanced state of incubation, but with care I was able to save it. Color, pure white; measurements, 1.70  $\times$  1.35. This nest and the ones examined of *E. forficatus* were on the breeding grounds of the common Crow, which accounts for the robbery and the few eggs found.

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## MANITOBAN NOTES.

BY ERNEST E. T. SETON.

ON the 8th of May I found a pair of the *Bubo virginianus arcticus* in possession of an old nest, in the 'Big Swamp' on the Assinaboine River, south of the 'Big Plain.' This nest was indistinguishable from that of a Red-tailed Buzzard. On the 15th of May I went with my friend Dr. Gilbert and we brought home the three young ones and the adult female. The nest contained two Partridges (*Bonasa*) and a hare. The young ones appeared to be about three weeks old; the largest weighed 1 lb. 5 oz., and was about the size of an ordinary pullet. One of the young ones was but half the size of the others; all were clad in white down, with the rudiments of black and white feathers showing in the wings and on the back. Their horns were plainly visible in the form of down tufts.

The young ones favored us with the usual amount of bill-snapping and hissing, but did not use their tremendous claws. One of them was injured and died before we got home, the